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Michael L. Boutte
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, mboutt1@lsu.edu

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VARIATION IN JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES: JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES AND JOB RETENTION IN LOUISIANA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Sociology

by
Michael L. Boutte
B.A., Louisiana State University, 2003
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ABSTRACT

The majority of sociological research on job search strategies has focused primarily on social networks with little attention given to all other forms of job search. Also, much of the existing literature focuses on outcomes of a job search as opposed to the search itself. This paper seeks to expand the job search literature by focusing on the characteristics that determine which job search method an individual will use and then predicting job retention as a result of the job search method. Using data from the Louisiana Job Search Survey (2002) I find that network structure has an effect on choosing personal contacts as a job search method. Particularly, having a higher proportion of weak ties in the network leads to higher probabilities of using personal contacts. I also find that job search methods vary by metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. I do not find that the job search method a person uses has an effect on job retention. The overall findings suggest that job search is not determined by personal characteristics, but instead seems to be related to the situations that surround job searches.

INTRODUCTION

Fluctuation in unemployment is always an issue of debate. Some critics assert that increased unemployment rates contribute to the nation's overall poverty problems. In order to effectively secure employment, a person must engage in some form of job search activity. The method by which a person searches for a job may be the determining factor for them receiving the job or even being considered for one.

Job search methods can be classified into two general categories, formal and informal (Reid 1972). Registering with an employment service and answering want ads are examples of formal methods. Using friends and relatives and going to the company directly are examples of informal methods. Although these methods can be categorized, there is no definite categorization scheme for them. With the growing popularity of the Internet, many employers are resorting to it as a recruiting tool. In some instances the Internet can be perceived as a formal method while in other instances it can be seen as an informal method. These different strategies, either formal and informal, could lead job seekers to different types of employment.

With few exceptions, the majority of sociological research on job search strategies has focused primarily on social networks and little attention has been given to other forms of job search. Furthermore, the literature is heavily rooted in job search outcomes. This paper expands the existing literature on job search by focusing on the characteristics that determine which job search method an individual will use and then predicting job retention as a result of the job search method.

The central focus of this paper is twofold. First, this paper will examine the job search method people use to obtain a specific occupation. Specifically, this paper seeks

to determine whether personal characteristics determine the job search method an individual will use. Second, it will examine the relationship between job search strategies and job retention. Admittedly, research on the methods individuals use when applying for specific jobs is limited. In what follows, I review the literature on job search strategies in order to build a model that will effectively predict the method a person will use to search for a job.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Networks and Job Search

The sociological literature on job searches is heavily rooted in Granovetter's (1974) work on the role of social networks and social ties on job searches. This provides a good reference point for sociological-based job search studies that seek to examine how job availability information is transmitted. Granovetter found that personal contacts were the top method that people used to obtain job information. In addition, people who obtained their job through a personal contact were more likely to be satisfied with that job and also more likely to be paid a higher wage than those who pursued formal means or applied directly to the company. He also found that acquaintances provided better job search information than did family and friends. These results however, were statistically significant only for white males with white collar jobs since his sample was restricted to professional, technical, and managerial workers.

Granovetter ultimately concluded that weak social ties (acquaintances) are more important when searching for a job than strong social ties (friends or relatives). Strong social ties generally have access to the same information that an individual could obtain on their own. However, weak social ties provide better job information because they usually have better access to job information one does not already have (Granovetter 1974, 1983; Yakubovich 2005). Although weak ties provide better job information, individuals are more likely to use strong ties because strong ties are more easily called on and willing to help (Granovetter 1983). This finding was later supported by Wegener (1991).

Montgomery (1992) takes a different approach by using the economic job search model to test the notion put forth by Bridges and Villemez (1986) that tie-strength (strong or weak) is not an important dimension of social capital.

> Because job-seekers lack complete knowledge of vacancies and must rely on information obtained through various formal and informal channels (e.g., direct application to employers, newspaper ads, and personal referrals), economists often conceptualize job search as a sequence of wage offers drawn randomly from an offer distribution. (Montgomery 1992: 586)

He found that even in the economic model, there is support for the strength-of-weak-ties hypothesis. Montgomery concludes that not only is tie strength important but attention should also be given to network structures (1992).

Using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), Bortnick and Ports (1992) found that for unemployed individuals[1], among job search strategies, the most common method used was going to the employer directly. This method, however, was not the most effective way for a person to secure a job. Ultimately, knowing someone presently employed at the firm had the biggest bearing on being hired.

Contrary to Bortnick and Ports (1992), research has shown that information from friends or relatives was the main method used to find jobs and there were different effects on pay for blacks and whites who used this method (Green, Tigges, and Diaz 1999). Green et al., use data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality which is a household survey that encompasses three metropolitan areas[2]. The design of the survey allows for an oversampling of minorities. Blacks who obtained information from

[1]Only looking at "active jobseekers" which are those unemployed individuals that have used one or more search methods.

[2]Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles

multiplex relationships (that fit the condition of strong tie, coworker, and neighbor) ran the risk of receiving a lower paying job, whereas whites were more likely to receive a higher paying job from these same relationships. A possible reason is that multiplex relationships work to consolidate the benefits of social capital among members of a privileged group while compounding the lower levels of social capital on a disadvantaged group (Coleman 1988). The source of the information also had an impact on job satisfaction. Blacks usually received the information from someone that was of relatively low status in the company while whites usually received their information from someone of higher status (Green et al. 1999).

Neighborhood and Job Search

Researchers have also examined how neighborhoods and location have an effect on job search. Elliot (1999) focused on the job search strategies of less educated individuals (those with no more than a high school degree). Among less educated workers in Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles, the highest paid jobs during the early 1990s were those acquired through formal channels. "This finding suggests that . . . the use of personal contacts serves as a strategy of last resort, rather than as a means of leveraging oneself into better jobs" (Elliot 1999: 213). Very few lower-educated workers use weak ties to find jobs and when they are used, it exerts a negative effect on earnings. This seems contradictory to the findings of Granovetter (1974; 1983), however, Elliot points out that since so few of the less-educated use this method, their networks are less developed and they do not get the rich information that more privileged individuals receive. This puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to finding a good job since, as reviewed earlier, weak ties have been previously shown to provide better job

information. He also shows that jobs with predominantly nonwhite coworkers pay significantly less than jobs with predominantly white coworkers.

Kleit (2002) also looks at the connection between an individual's neighborhood and their job search network. Specifically, Kleit looks at the difference in networks between poor women in scattered site public housing (public housing scattered throughout affluent neighborhoods) versus those in concentrated (or clustered) public housing. She concluded that dispersed residents tend to look for jobs of higher prestige, have more diverse job search networks and methods, and are more likely to find a job using formal methods. This effect is present regardless of the amount of contact individuals had with their neighbors. Kleit acknowledges that these effects may be overstated because of self-selection. If individuals chose to live in the scattered site public housing then the effects may be due to other characteristics associated with the women involved in the study (2002).

Other researchers have studied how individuals in remote rural communities search for jobs. Lindsay, Greig and McQuaid (2005) use a survey along with a series of focus groups to determine how unemployed individuals in remote rural areas seek employment. What they find is that job seekers in rural areas are less likely to have adequate access to formal job search methods such as job placement programs and staffing services. Individuals in rural communities rely heavily on social networks as a job search method.

Race and Job Search

Model (1988) found that individuals of a particular ethnic background (in this case Blacks, Italians and Jews) tend to refer individuals of the same ethnic background

for jobs. This is important because employers, particularly in small firms, generally hire people like themselves. Smaller firms tend to employ people of the same race because employee referral is strong in those situations and employees prefer working with people much like them. Although Model (1988) uses a small sample (45 respondents) her results are corroborated by Stoll et al. (2004) who show that blacks are more likely to apply to places where African-Americans are in positions of authority (mainly hiring). Also, blacks tend to be hired in those places where blacks are in authority positions as opposed to places where a white person is the hiring officer. They suggest that one of the reasons for the increase in applicants and hires may be related to the transfer of job availability through the informal networks (weak social ties) among blacks.

D'Amico and Maxwell (1995) suggested that differences in job search strategies may be related to cultural differences. Blacks were more likely than whites, for example, to quit searching for a job simply because they were not having any success. Petterson (1997) also tested the notion of a cultural difference in job searching. Specifically, he tested whether or not there was a difference in the reservation wage of blacks and whites, i.e., the wage below which the job seeker is not willing to take a job. Perhaps blacks have a higher reservation wage than whites which prices them out of the job market. What he discovered was that black men often accept jobs below their reservation wage at a higher rate than their white counterparts and therefore concluded that blacks are not less willing to work. Petterson further states that there are some jobs that neither whites nor blacks would be willing to work.

In a review of the economic literature on job search, Black (1981) states that the origins of on-the-job searches for blacks and whites do not differ. Both groups tend to

engage in on-the-job search in order to potentially maximize income. However, Keith and Williams (2002) found that living in the rural South reduced both blacks' and whites' job search possibilities. In particular, they emphasized that at any given moment, a higher percentage of employed blacks are likely to be engaged in job searches than are employed whites. The major reason behind this is job characteristics such as unsatisfactory wages or not foreseeing a promotion in the near future. Thus when blacks feel that present job characteristics, especially those related to future income, are not satisfactory, they will begin to search for a new job while still employed.

Another factor to consider is the growing popularity of the Internet. Wagner (1999) notes that the Internet has become increasingly popular as a method for job searching. Kuhn and Skuterud (2000) found that whites are more likely than blacks to engage in Internet job searches. This is simply due to the fact that whites have more access to the Internet. When access to the Internet is equally available to both groups, there is virtually no difference in usage for job search purposes.

Education and Job Search

Educational attainment also impacts job searching. Those at the college level or higher tend to be recruited by companies at higher rates than those with lower educational attainment. Ports (1993) found that over the period of 1970 to 1992, the usage of newspaper ads increased and the usage of public employment agencies decreased among job seekers. This could be due to the increases in educational attainment over the same period of time.

Sagen, Dallam and Laverty (1999) focus specifically on college graduates and their job search endeavors. They look at the effectiveness of different job search

techniques for people in different majors. What they found was that placement by the university (through a job placement office) proved to be an effective method for most individuals. However, direct contact with the employer, an informal job search method, was the only universal method that proved to be effective for all individuals. This is in stark contrast to previous literature that suggests going to a company directly is often the least effective job search method (Bortnick and Ports 1992; Green et al. 1999). A limitation of the study was that it was conducted at a single university at a single point in time.

Mau and Kopischke (2001) concluded that among college students, resume writing[3] was the most frequently reported method for obtaining a job. This led to the conclusion that among the educated, formal job search methods are preferred. This is largely due to the fact that those in college are seeking professional positions and the application process tends to be more formalized. In a study of recently unemployed laborers, Reid (1972) found that individuals are more likely to use informal methods because they want to be self-reliant. The formality of employment agencies seemed to deter some people from using it as a job search method. Reid also concludes that neither method is better than the other (formal nor informal).

Overall, the literature on job search and education tend to agree that as education increases, the probability of using formal job search methods also increases. With few exceptions, an individual with at least some college is more likely to use formal job search methods as opposed to informal methods. Although the probability of using

[3]This is similar to responding to newspaper ads. Individuals wrote resumes in response to posted job openings.

formal methods is higher for individuals with higher educational attainment, the effectiveness of using formal methods versus informal methods is disputed.

Occupation and Job Search

Some researchers have studied the types of jobs for which people apply and the method used to obtain the job. Blau (1992) used a data set which oversampled the poor and found that unemployed individuals reject fifty-three to fifty-seven percent of jobs offered. This may be related to the type of job which could be low-wage, part-time or temporary. What he found was that about seventy percent of unemployed searchers and ninety-five percent of employed searchers who accept a job and cease their search take jobs that are below their reservation wage. Pissarides and Wadsworth (1994) studied on-the-job search in Great Britain. They found that job characteristics have the strongest influences on search. Men and women with long job tenures are much less likely to search on-the-job. Younger men and women are more likely to search for jobs while still employed than older men and women.

Hypotheses

The preceding literature review shows that several factors influence a person's job search method; however, many of these factors were examined individually and framed in terms of job outcomes. Also, not all researchers agree on the benefits of using a particular method. Some believe that formal methods are better in terms of outcomes while others believe that informal methods provide better information and outcomes. With few exceptions, much of the previous research seems to suggest that the majority of individuals use some form of personal contact for obtaining job information. The literature seems to neglect the possibility that an individual's personal characteristics

have an influence on the way a person applies for a job. It could be possible that individuals use a different method depending on the type of job for which they are applying. Based upon a review of the existing literature on job search strategies, I propose the following hypotheses:

H1. Individuals with a network composed primarily of weak ties are more likely to use personal contacts as a search method compared to all other methods likewise, as tie strength increases an individual is less likely to use personal contacts.

H2. Individuals living in nonmetro areas are more likely to use informal job search strategies compared to those living in metro areas.

H3. Blacks are more likely to use informal job search strategies compared to their white counterparts.

H4. As educational attainment increases, the likelihood of using an informal search method decreases.

H5. Jobs of high occupational prestige are less likely to be obtained through informal job search methods as opposed to formal methods.

H6. Formal job search methods are more likely to lead to a person remaining employed compared to those individuals that obtain their job through informal methods.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data

The data for this study are drawn from the Louisiana Job Search Survey which was funded by the Louisiana Department of Labor. Conducted by telephone in 2002, the original sample includes data from 1408 respondents in six metropolitan parishes[4] (Shreveport: Bossier Parish and Caddo Parish, Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, New Orleans, and Monroe) and a group of nonmetropolitan parishes (Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carrol, Franklin, Madison, Morehouse, Richland, Tensas, Union, and West Carrol) in northeast Louisiana that form two contiguous labor market areas. About 200 interviews were conducted in each of the seven areas.

Individuals who were contacted to participate in the survey were only included in the sample if they were at least eighteen years old and fit one of the two categories: 1) The individual had gained employment within the last five years and still had a job at the time of the survey, or 2) The individual had gained employment within the last five years and was unemployed at the time of the survey. The time restriction sought to increase accuracy by limiting the period of recall on job search to the most recent five years.

This data set is unique because all individuals gained employment through the job search method reported. In prior studies, the focus has been on outcomes of job search methods while in this study, the outcome (obtaining a job) is the same for everyone in the sample and the focus is on personal characteristics that an individual

[4] Samples were taken of the core metro parishes for the cities listed. Both Bossier Parish and Caddo Parish were sampled for Shreveport.

has that may determine job search method choice. Furthermore, since all of the individuals in the sample gained employment through the job search method mentioned, it is possible to determine if some job search methods are better suited for employee retention, for some respondents were no longer employed at the time of the survey.

Dependent Variables

Since the first goal of this paper is to predict an individual's job search method, the dependent variable will be the job search method that the person used to obtain their current or most recent job. Respondents who were currently employed were asked how they learned about their current job. Those who were currently unemployed were asked how they learned about their most recent job before they became unemployed (during the past five years). Participants chose from the following responses: friends or relatives, other people, going to the company directly/walk-in, newspaper ad, job placement program through school, job placement program through a state or federal agency, promotion, temporary staffing service, other, or recruited by the company.

Job search methods were categorized into formal and informal search methods as follows: using newspaper ads and job placement programs (through school, a state or federal agency, or temporary staffing service) were classified as formal; friends or relatives, other people, and going to the company directly/walk-in were classified as informal; promotion and recruited by the company were combined with the other category since these methods are not initiated by the individual job seeker. Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages of each category. The majority of individuals using formal job search methods used newspaper ads (69 percent of category) while the

majority of those using informal methods used personal contacts (75 percent of category).

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Category	Frequency	Percent
Job Search Method		
Formal	236	20.61
Newspaper ads	163	69.07
Job Placement Program	73	30.93
Informal	681	59.48
Personal Contacts	514	75.48
Going to company directly	167	24.52
Other	228	19.91
Job Retention		
Employed	900	78.60
Unemployed	245	21.40
N	1145	

The data is somewhat limited due to the fact that nearly 20 percent (as shown in Table 1) of the respondents fall into the “other” category. The original data did not question individuals to find out what these “other” methods may have been. Since it is not known what these other methods are, it is possible that this category contains individuals that are using both formal and informal methods.

The second dependent variable that will be used is employment status at the time of the survey, since the second purpose of the paper is to examine the relationship between job search strategies and job retention. Employment status is a dichotomous variable which simply indicates whether or not a person is still employed. A person that

has retained their job is coded as (1) while a person that is no longer employed is coded as (0). Table 1 shows that about 79 percent of the individuals remained employed.

Predictor Variables

Since research has shown that social networks have an effect on job search, three measures of social networks will be included in the model (see Marsden 1990 for a review of network measures). The survey captured an individual's social network by using a series of name generators. Three aspects of the network will be included. The first is network size which will be calculated by counting the number of non-redundant names generated from the survey instrument. Essentially, people with larger networks will have more opportunities to use their network as a job search option.

The second aspect of the network will be network composition. Network composition is determined by creating a closeness index. Individuals were asked who in the network they were closest to. They were then asked who they were somewhat close to and not close at all to. Individuals that were closest are assigned a value of 1, while those that are somewhat close are assigned a value of 0.5 and those not close at all are assigned a value of 0. Closeness is measured by taking the mean of the values for all members of a respondent's network. This serves as a proxy for determining if the individual's network is composed largely of strong (values close to one) or weak ties (values close to zero). This variable is used to test the expectation that individuals with closeness measures closer to zero will be more likely to use personal contacts as their job search method.

Finally, the resources of the network will be incorporated by analyzing the average educational attainment for the members of an individual's network.

Respondents reported the total number of years of education for each member of the network. The mean number of years of education serves as average educational attainment. The more resource-rich a person's network is, the more likely they will be to use that avenue to find a job.

Parish was recoded into a series of dummy variables. The first variable was created by coding all nonmetropolitan parishes (Concordia, East Carroll, Madison, and Tensas along with Caldwell, Catahoula, Franklin, LaSalle, Morehouse, Richland, Union, and West Carroll) as (1) with (0) for all other parishes. The second variable is coded (1) for Orleans and (0) otherwise. All other metropolitan areas will serve as the reference category. Although Orleans is a metropolitan area, it exhibits characteristics that differ from the other metro areas involved; therefore, it is separated from these metro areas. Since research exists that shows a difference in job search strategies between rural and remote rural areas (Lindsay, Greig, and McQuaid 2005), the same could hold true for varying degrees of metro areas.

Race is also recoded into a series of dummy variables. The first variable is coded (1) for black and (0) otherwise. The second variable is coded (1) for Asian, American Indian, and other and (0) otherwise. The reference category is white. Since there are differences in motivations for search and outcomes of search, I expect to see differences in search methods by race.

The education level of the respondent was originally coded into eight categories. For the present analysis, education was recoded to combine the responses of none and working on a G. E. D. into no high school since these individuals have not completed the requirements for a high school diploma. The categories of G. E. D. and high school

diploma were coded into high school because these individuals have completed the requirements for a high school diploma or its equivalent. The categories identified as vocational or technical certification and community college or associate degree were coded as some college. The remaining response categories were coded into college degree or higher. A series of dummy variables was created from these categories with having a high school diploma or equivalent serving as the reference category.

Occupation is used to determine in which employment sector the individual works or has most recently worked. This refers to the job the individual obtained using the method reported. Respondents were allowed to give their actual position; they did not have to choose from predetermined categories. These responses were then coded into one of ten occupational categories. Each occupational category was then given an occupational prestige score based on the scores created by Davis et al. (1991)[5]. Occupational prestige will be used to determine if there is relationship between job search method and the type of job for which an individual is applying.

Occupation is used as an independent variable because it seems logical to assume that individuals are more likely to use different job search methods based upon the prestige of the job for which they are applying. I also assume that the occupation the individual received as a result of the job search method used was the occupation they intended to get. I expect that as the prestige of the occupation increases, a person will be more likely to use formal means of application (using an employment service and answering want ads) as opposed to informal means (contacts and going to the company directly).

[5]See Appendix for categories and prestige scores used in this analysis.

In the models that predict job retention, job search method will be used as a predictor variable. In these particular models, job search will be coded as a series of dummy variables. The first variable will be coded (1) for informal and (0) otherwise. The second will be coded (1) for other and (0) otherwise. The category formal job search methods will be used as the reference category.

Control Variables

Other variables are included in the models in order to control for possible effects on job search method choice and job retention. A variable is included which measures whether or not the individual holds a government job. This variable is included to control for any possible effects of working in the public sector as opposed to the private sector. Gender is included to control for any possible differences between men and women. Gender is a dummy variable with male being the reference category. Age is also included to control for any effect that age may have on job search. This variable is continuous.

Sample and Methods

There are two distinct samples presented in this analysis. The full sample consists of 1408 cases. After a listwise deletion of missing cases from the models presented below, 263 cases are lost. Thus, Sample One consists of 1145 cases or about 81 percent of the original sample. Sample Two is a subset of Sample One where individuals who chose “other” as a job search method are excluded. This is done in order to try to isolate the effect of using “other” methods. An additional 228 cases are deleted in that sample, leaving a total of 917 cases in Sample Two, or about 65 percent of the original sample.

Respondents were categorized into two groups based on their current employment situation. One group consists of those individuals who have gained employment within the last five years and still have a job. The other group consists of those individuals who have gained employment within the last five years and are currently unemployed. By analyzing these groups separately, it is possible to determine if particular job search methods are better suited for employee retention.

A series regression models will be presented in order to test the previously mentioned hypotheses. Models are presented in sets of two with a full model and a model that excludes the "other" category. The first set will consist of two binary logistic models which predict the probability of choosing personal contacts versus all other job search methods.

The second set of models seeks to predict the probability of a person choosing a particular job search method (formal, informal, or other). In this case, a multinomial logit model will be used. Since the dependent variable contains three nominal categories (formal, informal, and other) that have no inherent rank ordering the multinomial logit model is appropriate. A second model will be run which eliminates the "other" category (a comparison of formal versus informal). The dependent variable will then be dichotomous so a logit model will be appropriate

The final set of models seeks to predict the probability of an individual retaining a job based upon their choice of job search method. A binary logit model is appropriate in this case because the dependent variable is dichotomous indicating whether or not a person is still employed.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows that 64 percent of the respondents in the sample are female. There is an overrepresentation of females in the sample because, as with most telephone surveys, females are more likely to answer the telephone. Louisiana's population consists of 52 percent females. Approximately 32 percent of the sample is black, nearly identical to the proportion of blacks in the state of Louisiana (33 percent according to the 2000 U.S. Census). The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 79 with a mean of 35. More than 94 percent of the individuals have a high school diploma (or equivalent) or higher. The average person in the sample is a white female living in a metro area (excluding Orleans) with a high school diploma or equivalent and works in the private sector.

Table 3 presents the mean of all independent variables by job search method used while Table 4 presents the mean of all independent variables by employment status. Table 3 shows that individuals who use personal contacts as a job search method have larger networks than those who use all other methods and their networks consist of weaker ties. This also holds true for individuals that use informal job search methods. Table 4 shows that individuals living in nonmetro areas have a higher chance of being unemployed than those living in other areas.

Recall that 263 observations were excluded from the models as a result of applying listwise deletion of missing values. After running diagnostic tests (pairwise comparison of means and crosstabulations) to determine what effect the excluded cases have on the dependent variable, I found that these cases are not missing at random.

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Dependent Variables				
Job Search Method				
Personal Contacts	0.449	0.498	0	1
Formal	0.206	0.405	0	1
Informal	0.595	0.491	0	1
Other	0.199	0.400	0	1
Employed	0.786	0.410	0	1
Predictor Variables				
Network			0	1
Network Size	4.771	2.470	1	19
Average Education of Network Members	13.686	2.599	0	24
Average Closeness to Network members	0.715	0.216	0	1
Location				
Non-metro area	0.157	0.364	0	1
Metro area (exc. Orleans)	0.726	0.446	0	1
Orleans	0.117	0.322	0	1
Race				
White	0.648	0.478	0	1
Black	0.316	0.465	0	1
Other	0.036	0.186	0	1
Education				
No High School	0.056	0.230	0	1
High School or Equivalent	0.448	0.498	0	1
Some College	0.201	0.401	0	1
Bachelor's or Higher	0.295	0.456	0	1
Occupational Prestige	41.903	9.264	27.84	64.38
Control Variables				
Government Job	0.230	0.421	0	1
Female	0.635	0.482	0	1
Age	35.131	12.177	18	79
N	1145			

TABLE 3. MEAN OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES BY JOB SEARCH TYPE

Independent Variables	Job Search Type: Personal Contacts	Job Search Type: All Other Methods	Job Search Type: All Other Methods (excluding Other)
Predictor Variables			
Network			
Network Size	5.181	4.437	4.295
Average Education of Network Members	13.622	13.738	13.483
Average Closeness to Network members	0.695	0.731	0.740
Location			
Non-metro area	0.158	0.157	0.171
Metro area (exc. Orleans)	0.757	0.700	0.687
Orleans	0.086	0.143	0.141
Race			
White	0.671	0.629	0.581
Black	0.307	0.323	0.367
Other	0.021	0.048	0.052
Education			
No High School	0.056	0.055	0.067
High School or Equivalent	0.486	0.417	0.444
Some College	0.181	0.217	0.233
Bachelor's or Higher	0.276	0.311	0.256
Occupational Prestige	41.396	42.316	41.350
Control Variables			
Government Job	0.232	0.228	0.211
Female	0.634	0.636	0.665
Age	34.237	35.859	35.769
N	514	631	403

(TABLE 3 CONTINUED)

	Job Search Type		
Independent Variables	Formal	Informal	Other
Predictor Variables			
Network			
Network Size	4.314	4.957	4.689
Average Education of Network Members	13.823	13.470	14.189
Average Closeness to Network members	0.730	0.710	0.714
Location			
Non-metro area	0.089	0.189	0.132
Metro area (exc. Orleans)	0.746	0.720	0.724
Orleans	0.165	0.091	0.145
Race			
White	0.564	0.655	0.715
Black	0.394	0.313	0.246
Other	0.042	0.032	0.039
Education			
No High School	0.030	0.072	0.035
High School or Equivalent	0.381	0.498	0.368
Some College	0.280	0.178	0.189
Bachelor's or Higher	0.309	0.253	0.408
Occupational Prestige	42.181	41.097	44.023
Control Variables			
Government Job	0.237	0.217	0.259
Female	0.661	0.643	0.583
Age	36.140	34.485	36.018
N	236	681	228

TABLE 4. MEAN OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Independent Variables	Employed	Unemployed
Predictor Variables		
Job Search Type		
Formal	0.207	0.204
Informal	0.576	0.665
Other	0.218	0.131
Network		
Network Size	4.834	4.539
Average Education of Network Members	13.840	13.120
Average Closeness to Network members	0.714	0.719
Location		
Non-metro area	0.143	0.208
Metro area (exc. Orleans)	0.740	0.673
Orleans	0.117	0.118
Race		
White	0.671	0.563
Black	0.296	0.392
Other	0.033	0.045
Education		
No High School	0.042	0.106
High School or Equivalent	0.424	0.535
Some College	0.206	0.184
Bachelor's or Higher	0.328	0.176
Occupational Prestige	42.426	39.983
Control Variables		
Government Job	0.227	0.241
Female	0.604	0.747
Age	35.529	33.669
N	900	245

Table 5 presents the results of a pairwise comparison of means which illustrates the difference in means between cases that are included in the models and those that are excluded. Individuals that are included in the models have a larger network size, live in a metro area excluding Orleans, are white and have a high school diploma. Individuals that are excluded have a network whose members have a higher education level, live in Orleans, have race "other" and have a bachelor's degree or higher. As a result, the findings of this paper pertain to a select group of individuals and are not an exact representation of the population of the state of Louisiana or the average job seeker. However, the following results will show that even though these cases are not missing at random, they seem to have little or no effect on the results of the analysis.

Job Search Methods

Much of the literature on job search strategies focuses on the role of social networks on job search outcomes (Granovetter 1974, 1983; Green et al. 1999; Yakubovich 2005). What these studies suggest is that individuals rely on their networks for valuable job search information. Model 1 of Table 6 presents the effects of tie strength and other independent variables on choosing personal contacts as a job search method. I hypothesized that individuals with a network composed primarily of weak ties are more likely to use personal contacts as a search method compared to all other methods (H1). I find support for this hypothesis (H1). Each unit increase in closeness decreases the odds of using personal contacts by 44 percent holding all other variables constant. Model 2 of Table 6 presents the same model, but excludes the "other" category from the dependent variable. This model also supports H1 by showing that each unit

TABLE 5. PAIRWISE COMPARISON OF MEANS FOR INCLUDED AND EXCLUDED CASES

Variable	Mean			$P(Chi^2)$
	Included	</>*	Excluded	
Predictor Variables				
Network				
Network Size	4.771	>	1.878	0.000
Average Education of Network Members	13.686	<	14.336	0.034
Average Closeness to Network members	0.715		0.694	0.339
Location				
Non-metro area	0.157		0.130	0.265
Metro area (exc. Orleans)	0.726	>	0.649	0.013
Orleans	0.117	<	0.221	0.000
Race				
White	0.648	>	0.527	0.000
Black	0.316		0.365	0.140
Other	0.036	<	0.108	0.000
Education				
No High School	0.056		0.069	0.408
High School or Equivalent	0.448	>	0.369	0.021
Some College	0.201		0.169	0.245
Bachelor's or Higher	0.295	<	0.392	0.002
Occupational Prestige	41.903		42.139	0.716
Control Variables				
Government Job	0.230		0.253	0.437
Female	0.635		0.603	0.336
Age	35.131		36.500	0.165
N	1145		263	

Note: *Sign provided for statistically significant differences. ($p<.05$)

TABLE 6. LOGISTIC COEFFICIENTS FOR REGRESSION OF PERSONAL CONTACTS ON SELECTED INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Model 1			Model 2 (Excluding Other)		
Independent Variables	b	S.E.†	e^b	b	S.E.†	e^b
Predictor Variables						
Network						
Network Size	0.120*	0.049	1.128	0.131*	0.059	1.140
Average Education of Network Members	0.006	0.029	1.006	0.013	0.032	1.014
Average Closeness to Network members	-0.582***	0.149	0.559	-0.775**	0.237	0.461
Location						
Non-metro area	-0.049	0.159	0.953	-0.112	0.162	0.894
Orleans	-0.493***	0.103	0.611	-0.476***	0.112	0.622
Race						
Black	-0.005	0.222	0.995	-0.165	0.186	0.848
Other	-0.729	0.428	0.483	-0.855	0.495	0.425
Education						
No High School	-0.011	0.227	0.989	-0.087	0.274	0.917
Some College	-0.348**	0.120	0.706	-0.397*	0.176	0.673
Bachelor's or Higher	-0.171	0.203	0.843	-0.019	0.235	0.981
Occupational Prestige	-0.012	0.008	0.988	-0.007	0.006	0.993

(TABLE 6 CONTINUED)

	Model 1			Model 2 (Excluding Other)		
Independent Variables	b	S.E.†	e^b	b	S.E.†	e^b
Control Variables						
Government Job	0.073	0.129	1.076	0.144	0.130	1.155
Female	0.006	0.154	1.006	-0.116	0.160	0.891
Age	-0.007	0.005	0.993	-0.007	0.005	0.993
Constant	0.503	0.458		0.813	0.520	

Notes: † Robust standard errors presented for clustering on parish.
*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001
Model 1 Pseudo R^2 =0.0346 N=1145
Model 2 Pseudo R^2 =0.0443 N=917

increase in closeness decreases the odds of using personal contacts by 54 percent holding all other variables constant.

Figure 1 shows the comparison between the two models by showing the predicted probability of choosing personal contacts versus all other methods. Instead of calculating probabilities based on the mean of each independent variable, I calculated the probabilities based on the average person in the sample for all dichotomous variables. All continuous variables were left at their means. The figure presented is based on a white female living in a metro area (excluding Orleans) with a high school diploma or equivalent and working in the private sector with all other variables held at their means.

The probabilities based on Model 1 show that when closeness reaches 0.7, meaning that 70 percent of the network is composed of strong ties (friends or family members), there is an equal probability of using either personal contacts or all other methods. Only beyond this point is the probability of using all other methods higher than using personal contacts. In other words, a person whose network is composed of more than 70 percent strong ties has a higher probability of using any other job search method besides their personal contacts. Since this is below the sample mean (0.715 as illustrated on Table 2), the average person in this sample has a higher probability of using all other search methods as opposed to using personal contacts. The probabilities based on Model 2 do not exhibit this same characteristic. In fact, the probabilities of using personal contacts are higher at all levels of closeness. Overall, the figure shows that as closeness increases, the probability of using personal contacts decreases and the probability of using other methods increases. This holds true for both Model 1 and Model 2.

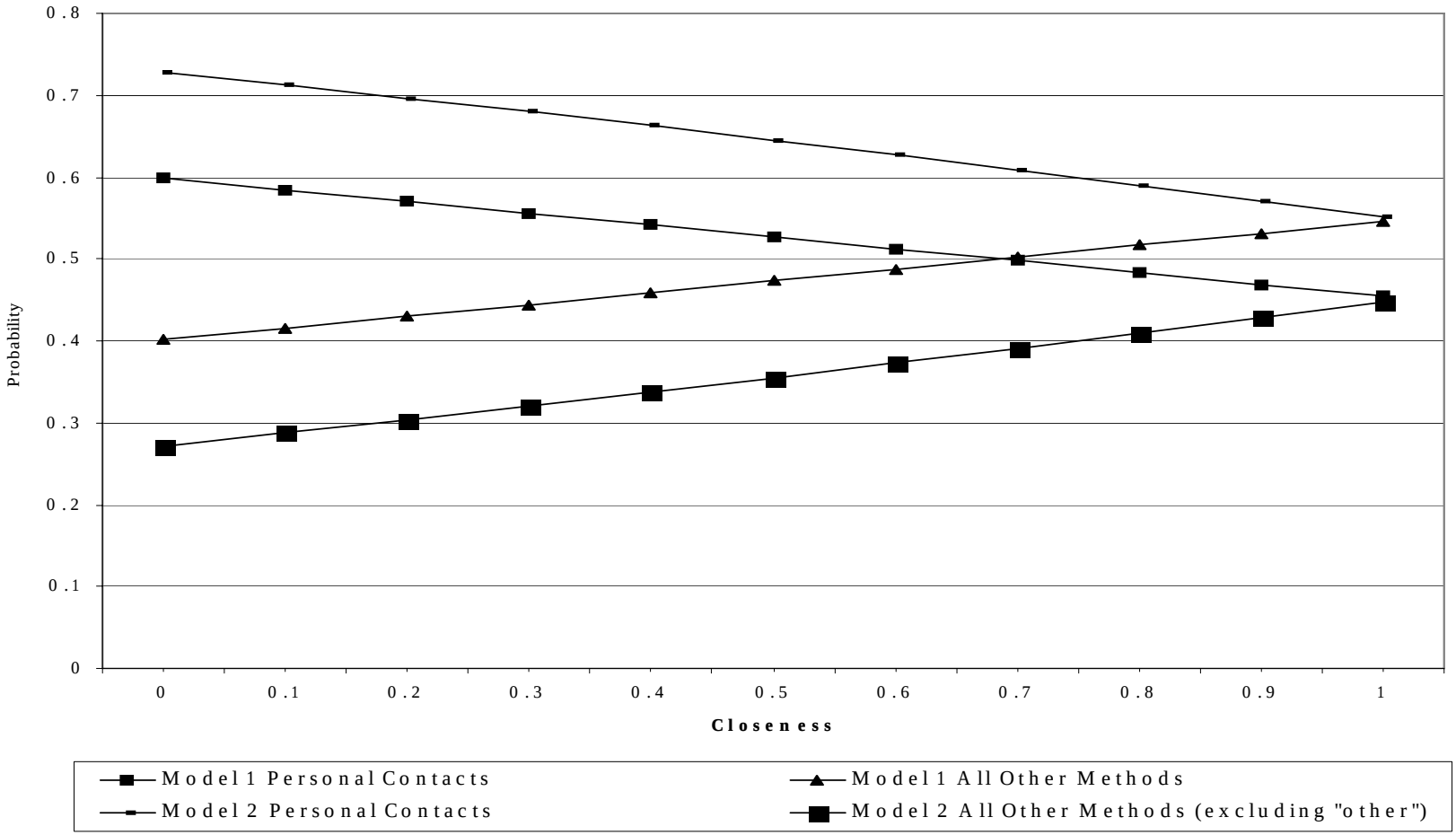

FIGURE 1. PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF JOB SEARCH METHOD BY AVERAGE CLOSENESS TO NETWORK MEMBERS

Both Model 1 and Model 2 (Table 6) show that network size, living in Orleans and having some college have an effect on choosing personal contacts as a search method. Model 1 shows that each additional member of the network increases the odds of using personal contacts by about 13 percent. Living in Orleans decreases the odds by 38 percent and having some college decreases the odds by 29 percent. The findings of Model 2 are similar with each additional member of the network increasing the odds of using personal contacts by about 14 percent while living in Orleans decreases the odds by about 38 percent and having some college decreases the odds by about 33 percent holding all other variables constant. Since using personal contacts is the most popular informal search method, it is not surprising that these results are consistent with those obtained in Models 3 and 4 below.

Turning to Model 3 of Table 7, I do find support for H2 which stated that individuals living in nonmetro areas are more likely to use informal job search strategies compared to those living in metro areas. The odds of using informal methods relative to informal methods are 2.2 times greater for individuals living in nonmetro areas compared to metro areas holding all other variables constant. Model 4 of Table 8 also supports this finding. This finding is consistent with that of Lindsay, Greig and McQuaid (2005), which suggests that social networks are important in rural and nonmetro areas as a job search strategy. Also, with regard to location, I find that living in Orleans decreases the odds of using informal job search strategies by about 35 percent (Model 3 of Table 7 and Model 4 of Table 8).

Using Model 3 of Table 7, I do not find support for H3 which stated that blacks are more likely to use informal job search strategies compared to their white

TABLE 7. MULTINOMIAL LOGIT ESTIMATES OF JOB SEARCH STRATEGY MODEL

	Model 3			
Independent Variables	b	S.E.[†]	b	S.E.[†]
Predictor Variables	Informal[‡]		Other[‡]	
Network				
Network Size	0.112*	0.046	0.044	0.056
Average Education of Network Members	0.003	0.036	0.030	0.026
Average Closeness to Network members	-0.314	0.241	-0.228	0.488
Location				
Non-metro area	0.789***	0.095	0.550***	0.105
Orleans	-0.430***	0.092	0.027	0.084
Race				
Black	-0.333	0.158	-0.623**	0.211
Other	-0.244	0.426	-0.244	0.447
Education				
No High School	0.718	0.547	0.396	0.535
Some College	-0.776***	0.184	-0.448	0.292
Bachelor's or Higher	-0.371	0.206	0.038	0.176
Occupational Prestige	-0.008	0.007	0.009	0.006
Control Variables				
Government Job	-0.047	0.175	0.093	0.229
Female	-0.059	0.210	-0.289	0.215
Age	-0.010	0.006	-0.005	0.011
Constant	1.766**	0.568	-0.338	0.899

Notes: [†] Robust standard errors presented for clustering on parish.
[‡] In comparison to using formal methods
*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001
Pseudo R^2 = 0.0437 N=1145

TABLE 8. LOGISTIC COEFFICIENTS FOR REGRESSION OF JOB SEARCH STRATEGY ON SELECTED INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Model 4 (Excluding Other)		
Independent Variables	b	S.E.†	e^b
Predictor Variables			
Network			
Network Size	0.104**	0.044	1.110
Average Education of Network Members	-0.003	0.037	0.997
Average Closeness to Network members	-0.370	0.240	0.691
Location			
Non-metro area	0.785***	0.093	2.193
Orleans	-0.427***	0.098	0.653
Race			
Black	-0.364*	0.148	0.695
Other	-0.218	0.417	0.804
Education			
No High School	0.692	0.568	1.998
Some College	-0.797***	0.191	0.451
Bachelor's or Higher	-0.346	0.211	0.707
Occupational Prestige	-0.008	0.007	0.992
Control Variables			
Government Job	-0.063	0.184	0.939
Female	-0.060	0.194	0.942
Age	-0.009	0.007	0.991
Constant	1.908**	0.562	

Notes: † Robust standard errors presented for clustering on parish.
*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001
Pseudo R^2 =0.0596 N=917

counterparts. Model 4 of Table 8, which omits the "other" category, actually finds the opposite to be true. In fact, being black decreases the odds of using informal job search methods by about 31 percent.

Hypothesis 4 (H4) which stated that as educational attainment increases, the likelihood of using an informal search method decreases is only partially supported. The only level of educational attainment that seems to have an effect on choosing a job search method is having some college. Model 3 of Table 7 shows that having some college decreases the odds of choosing informal methods relative to formal methods by about 54 percent. Model 4 of Table 8 shows the same finding. This suggests that job search does not vary much by educational attainment. This partially supports the existing literature (Ports 1993; Mau and Kopischke 2001; Sagen, Dallam and Laverty 1999) which states that higher educated individuals prefer formal job search methods over informal methods. The fact that this effect is only seen when individuals have some college may be due to the fact that respondents with a high school diploma or equivalent are more likely to be included in the sample while those with a bachelor's degree or higher are more likely to be excluded.

Neither Model 3 (Table 7) nor Model 4 (Table 8) show support for H5 which stated that jobs of high occupational prestige are less likely to be obtained through informal job search methods as opposed to formal methods. The lack of a statistically significant finding suggests that individuals can apply to jobs of a particular prestige in a variety of ways. The same type of job may be advertised in different ways which makes it possible to apply in a variety of ways. Since the data asked individuals to choose the

one way that they heard about their job, there is no way to test multiple scenarios with this data set.

Job Retention

As mentioned previously, this data set is unique because the outcome (obtaining a job) is the same for everyone in the sample. Approximately 79 percent of the sample had remained employed at the time of the survey (Table 1). Overall, employed individuals have a larger network, hold jobs with higher occupational prestige, and have a higher percentage of college graduates (Table 4). Unemployed individuals are more likely to be female, black, and live in a nonmetro area. The logit model presented predicts job retention based upon job search method used and other personal characteristics.

Hypothesis 6 (H6) stated that formal job search methods are more likely to lead to a person remaining employed compared to those individuals that obtain their job through informal methods. Model 5 of Table 9 which evaluates the effect of job search strategy and other personal characteristics on job retention show no support for H6. This suggests that there are no differences in job retention based upon the method an individual uses to apply for a job. Since all of the individuals in this data set did get a job with the search method used, it is highly possible that the reason that they did not retain their job may be related to other factors not included in the model. Excluding the "other" category (model not reported) provided no statistically significant difference in determining job retention based upon job search method.

In Model 5 of Table 9 there are two significant predictor variables. Having some college or a bachelor's degree or higher both increase the odds of retaining a job.

Having some college increases the odds of remaining employed by about 33 percent, holding all other variables constant. Likewise, having a college degree or higher increases the odds of remaining employed by about 67 percent holding all other variables constant. Gender is a significant control variable in determining job retention. Being female decreases the odds of retaining a job by about 47 percent (Table 9, Model 5). This finding could be related to the fact that females generally have a higher rate of turnover in the labor force so this finding is consistent with existing literature.

TABLE 9. LOGISTIC COEFFICIENTS FOR REGRESSION OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS ON SELECTED INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Model 5		
Independent Variables	b	S.E.†	e^b
Predictor Variables			
Job Search Method			
Informal	-0.076	0.156	0.927
Other	0.392	0.224	1.480
Network			
Network Size	0.030	0.032	1.031
Average Education of Network Members	0.032	0.037	1.032
Average Closeness to Network members	0.041	0.337	1.042
Location			
Non-metro area	-0.244	0.176	0.783
Orleans	-0.073	0.097	0.930
Race			
Black	-0.159	0.141	0.853
Other	-0.537	0.397	0.584
Education			
No High School	-0.492	0.286	0.611
Some College	0.284*	0.116	1.328
Bachelor's or Higher	0.514*	0.208	1.673
Occupational Prestige	0.016	0.008	1.016
Control Variables			
Government Job	-0.185	0.170	0.831
Female	-0.636**	0.200	0.529
Age	0.009	0.010	1.009
Constant	0.156	0.591	

Notes: † Robust standard errors presented for clustering on parish.
*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001
Model 5 Pseudo R^2=0.0581 N=1145

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study had two goals. First, using the existing literature on job searching and job search outcomes, I attempted to predict, from various personal characteristics, which job search method a person will use. Specifically, I tested whether or not an individual's network, location, race, educational attainment, and intended occupation had an effect on the job search method used. The second purpose was to test the effect of using a particular job search method on job retention.

Since previous studies only viewed personal characteristics in terms of job search outcomes, this paper fills a gap in the literature by demonstrating that few personal characteristics have an effect on the method a person uses to search for a job. Those characteristics that do have an effect include social networks, residence and some education. The findings presented show that the odds of a person using personal contacts as opposed to all other job search methods increase as tie strength decreases. Individuals with a network composed primarily of weak ties are more likely to use personal contacts as a search method. Also, job search methods differ by metro and nonmetro areas. Living in a nonmetro area increases the odds of an individual using informal job search methods. On the other hand, living in a metropolitan area increases the odds of using a formal job search method. There is some support to show that as educational attainment increases, the odds of using informal job search methods decrease. Having some college decreases the odds of using informal job search methods while having a bachelor's degree or higher seems to have no effect on using a formal or informal method.

In contrast to the literature on job search outcomes which indicate that race and occupation have an effect on obtaining employment, I found no support to indicate that the choice of job search strategy varies among these characteristics. A possible reason for the lack of a finding is that individuals have limited choice in the job search method that they ultimately use to obtain a job. In many circumstances, there may be a specific procedure or several possible procedures that one could follow, – and in some cases have to follow, in order to secure a position with an employer. Since the survey only allowed respondents to report one method, it is possible that some individuals were forced by the interview to choose one of several methods used. The situations surrounding the job search could have an effect on the search.

The second goal of this paper was to determine the relationship between job search strategy and job retention. The findings of this paper indicate that the method by which a person searches for a job has no effect on job retention when controlling for various personal characteristics. Although job retention does not vary by job search method, there are other personal characteristics that determine whether or not a person keeps the job. Specifically, in terms of education, having at least some college makes one more likely to retain a job than having just a high school diploma. There are conflicting findings in the literature about which methods provide better job search information and in turn lead to better outcomes; this study suggests that neither job search method (formal nor informal) is better in terms of keeping a job.

Although these data are good for looking at job retention, they do not allow one to determine which methods may be better than others at actually getting a job. Since everyone in the sample obtained a job using the method reported, we are missing the

searches of those individuals that were unsuccessful. The data is also limited due to the fact that nearly 20 percent of the respondents indicated "other" for the job search method used. By having such a large portion of the sample in this category, it is difficult to explain the variation among job search strategies since there is no way to tell what these "other" methods may have been or how they split into formal and informal. With the growing popularity of the Internet and the increase in homes with Internet access, it is highly possible that a portion of the "other" category consists of individuals using this method. The Louisiana Job Search Survey did not offer respondents the choice to report the Internet as their job search method. Future research on job search should seek to find what "other" methods people are using to find jobs. It would also be beneficial to be able to determine which job search methods are better suited in particular situations since as this paper presents, few personal characteristics have an effect on job search method choice.

Since this paper shows that few personal characteristics have an effect on the choice of job search method, it leads to the possibility that individuals are not entirely free to choose how to search for a job. It is possible that job search is a function of how employers search for employees. If jobs are advertised in a specific way, then applicants are inclined to reply in the manner which the advertisement specifies. This eliminates the possibility of some personal characteristics having an influence on the job search method used. Future studies on job search strategies should investigate the method by which an employer searches for an employee. This would allow one to determine if the job search method a person uses is really a function of employers looking for employees.

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APPENDIX: OCCUPATION RECODE CATEGORIES

Category	Prestige Score
Professional	64.38
Managerial	53.52
Technical	51.21
Sales	35.77
Service (excluding domestic)	39.67
Precision Manufacturing Work/Craftsmen	38.51
Clerical	38.16
Farm Operator	35.57
Operators/Fabricators/Laborers (including Farm)	33.38
Domestic	27.84

VITA

Michael Louis Boutte was born in Jeanerette, Louisiana, on January 30, 1981. He is currently a graduate student in the sociology program at Louisiana State University under the direction of Dr. Joachim Singelmann. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in the major area of sociology with a concentration in criminology and a minor in African and African-American studies in 2003. Michael is a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in the May 2006 commencement. He plans to pursue the degree of Doctor of Philosophy degree in sociology.